

HISTORY, GEOLOGY AND RANCHING ON THE ARIZONA STRIP

NORTH OF THE COLORADO

Compiled by Phil Foremaster

Those of you who came down Highway 91 through Utah to this meeting crossed a corner of the Arizona Strip. Though I live in the State of Utah my ranch is on the Strip. It is a unique area. We love it and call it God's country although there are times when the rain fails to fall and the snow misses us that we think it is close to hell. The Strip is in the northwest corner of Arizona and lies North of the great canyon of the Colorado. Utah borders it on the North. Nevada borders it on the West. The first mountains of the earth's surface can be seen in the bottom of the canyon of the Colorado. Geologists have studied the walls of its three thousand foot depth. They tell us to travel from the canyon's depth to the red peaks of Bryce's Canyon and we will have traversed the Geologic history of the world.

At this time the Strip rests as a hammock between two great dams on the Colorado; the Boulder or Hoover dam on the west and Glen Canyon dam on the east. It is three million two hundred and fifty thousand acres of mountains, plains, gorges, and renowned faults. The Hurricane fault, a geologist's paradise emerges at Cedar City, Utah traverses the Strip across the Colorado and died near Peach Springs. Three breaks in the fault's cliffs, as it makes its way seventy miles or more through the Strip, permit access from lower country to the higher elevation. This fault has provided the longest and possibly the cheapest fence on the whole area. Cattle seldom move from the base of the fault to its height. The Grand Wash Cliffs emerge in the Strip's southwest corner. The Sevier Fault east of the Hurricane fault also emerges in Utah and carries water from the high Plateaus of Utah to Necessin Springs and Pipe Springs, historical points of the Strip. Still farther East the Kanab Plateau is separated from the Kaibab plateau by the paunsaugunt fault coming down from Bryce Canyon area.

Three bridges: one at Boulder dam, one at Glen Canyon dam, and the other thirty miles down stream from Glen Canyon Dam provide entrance to the Strip from the Great state of Arizona. These bridges are of recent origin. I believe that most Arizonians know little about the Strip because of its inaccessibility. Previous to the bridges, river crossings were made by ferry, or swimming, at the Crossing of the Fathers, at Lees Ferry, Pearcos Ferry, Greggs Ferry and Hanella's Ferry.

Utah's settlers early learned the potential of the Strip and wished that they could get it attached to Utah. They knew that three states, the size of Rhode Island, could lie comfortably upon its breast. An effort was made in the early history of the two states to try and get this spot from Arizona. Two men were selected in southern Utah to contact Arizona officials in Phoenix. These emissaries traveled by buggy to Modena, Utah; thence by rail to Salt Lake City; from thence by rail to Denver, Colorado, and eventually they arrived in Phoenix. The deal was never made.

The maintenance of law and order on the Strip was never a very serious problem although at times some one did get caught stealing horses or cattle. Cocoino's county seat at Flagstaff and Mohave's county seat at Kingman seemed many days away. By the time one traveled from his ranch to either of these places he had covered many miles. It was expensive to transport witnesses ect. to these county seats and so many law breakers were forgiven and forgotten, not because one loved them, but rather because there was little use in going to a lot of effort and expense.

Possibly the first white people to tread the Arizona Strip were Fathers Silvestre Vales Escalante and Francisco Domingues who had set out from Santa Fe, New Mexico to find a northern route to the newly founded mission of Monteray, California. This company after passing through wester Colorado and into and down through Utah followed the great Hurricane Fault into Strip country and climbed the fault at a spot where a volcanic formation had broken the perpendicular face of the ledge. The fathers climbed the fault and found good pasturage but no water. They named the spot San Angel. This was in the fall of 1776.

Later in the 1870's the Mormon people built a road up the fault at this spot and hauled lumber into St. George and used it in the building of a temple. I now own in a reservoir at this spot.

It is quite possible that some trappers and Mexicans were on the Strip but the next definite history reports that Jedidiah Strong Smith (a trapper) fifty years later in 1826 passed down the Virgin River and through difficult narrows of the river on the Arizona Strip. His report was that they found it very difficult to get through the narrows and at points could almost reach from one wall to another. At this time, 1965, the State of Arizona is endeavoring to cut a part of U.S. Highway fifteen down through this gorge. It is estimated that parts of the project will cost from four to five million dollars per mile and will necessitate three bridges.

Tribes of Indians had roamed the Strip from indefinite times and had moved from the Strip into southern Utah and vice versa. It was learned later from these Indians that they had always feared the ferocious Indians who roamed on the south side of the Great River. Indian legend has it that these Indians from the southern banks of the river would cross into the area, steal the native children, and take them to sell to their own tribes south of the river. These tribes of the Strip and southern Utah survived, it is quite possible, because of the difficulty in crossing the Great Colorado.

The next white people to play a part in the history of the Strip were the Mormon people led by Brigham Young. These people settled in the area of the Great Salt Lake in 1847. They had moved from the Eastern and middle states of the United States toward the Rocky Mountains to find refuge and a place to worship as they wished. They were a proselyting people, sending missionaries to European countries and to the eastern United States to teach their religion. Because of their proselyting, people were converted and immediately emigrated toward the mountains. Brigham Young found it necessary to expand and therefore sent scouts and missionaries in all directions from their base at Salt Lake City. These scouts moved southward into southern Utah and as the years rolled by people settled along the borders of the Arizona Strip.

A young man living in Tooele, Utah, was selected by Brigham Young in April of 1854 to go as an Indian scout to Southern Utah. Previous to this time the young man had had considerable experience with the Indians of the area and had been on a number of expeditions into Indian territory to try and stop their stealing of livestock. During this period he had learned to love the Indians and had vowed never to fight them. His call to the south as an Indian scout, I feel sure, had much to do with the development of southern Utah, the Arizona Strip and the area of Arizona immediately south of the Colorado. His name was Jacob Hamblin. He spent many years as an Indian scout. He died and was buried at Pleasanton, New Mexico, but his remains were later taken to Alpine, Arizona.

Jacob Hamblin moved to the southern part of Utah, settled his family on the Santa Clara creek at what is now Santa Clara, Utah. The remainder of his life was spent as a missionary and scout to the Indians. It is said of him that he was quiet with them; talked low when he did talk; told them the truth and always made an extra effort to fulfill all the promises made them. Such a man was needed in the growth of the Arizona Strip. Brigham Young felt convinced that he should make his people self supporting. He had heard of the mild climate in southern Utah and felt that many crops could be raised there that could not be raised in the North. He thought of cotton, grapes, and other crops favoring a warmer climate. His people began to settle the region of the Virgin River. This river heads in southern Utah, cuts across the Arizona Strip and empties into the Colorado river in Nevada.

In the autumn of 1858 Jacob Hamblin was sent to visit the Moqui Indians on the east side of the Colorado River. The object was to get acquainted with the Indians; to win their respect and confidence and, of course, to learn more about them. The company of twelve men headed by Jacob Hamblin camped the third night at the point of a red mountain and at the site of a spring which we now know as Pipe Springs. Pipe Springs is on the Arizona Strip and is a National Monument. The 4th night they camped at the foot of the Buckskin mountains. This mountain is now the Kaibab National Forest and many people have visited the Grand Canyon National Park. The tenth day from their home they crossed the Colorado River at the Ute Ford. This place is also known as the Crossing of the Fathers.

I have often wondered just why this expedition moved north from the Buckskin as did the Spanish fathers, and cross the river where they did. My conclusion is that they saw the Buckskin mountains were high and, in the fall of the year covered with snow, so they tried to turn around them at the north and move east to the river.

It seems that after this first trip the travel across the Colorado was at a point now known as Lee's ferry some thirty miles down the river from the Crossing of the Fathers. Hamblin continued to visit the Indians on the south and east side of the river always trying to keep them from crossing the river and going into the settlements to steal stock. He arrived at the river one day on the 10th of January, 1858. The river was running high and great chunks of ice were floating by. The company pushed their horses into the stream and swam across the river dodging the ice. They suffered very much in their saturated clothing and the damp air.

It was discovered in the early settlement of the southern area that the main water was on the Virgin River and the Santa Clara Creek. A dry stream bed, which later became known in the vicinity of St. George, as the Fort Pearce Wash, meandered some eighty to ninety miles in a northwesterly

direction through the Arizona Strip. It entered Utah and flowed six miles from the Arizona line to join with the Santa Clara and the Virgin at St. George. It was only during summer flood time that this wash carried any amount of water. Due to the scarcity of water farther south the settlers stopped on the Virgin River. The Virgin River cuts through the Strip for some eighteen miles South of St. George with no chance for using the water until it finally emerges through the narrows just before leaving Arizona. Littlefield, Arizona a small town was established at this point and still flourishes.

Due to the scarcity of water on the Strip there have been no large towns of any size built in its interior. The Mormons established several families on what was known as Mt. Trumbull in 1874 for the purpose of running a sawmill and cutting lumber for their temple in St. George.¹ This little settlement was abandoned soon after the building was completed. This settlement was located on the top of the Hurricane fault and in the area of Nixon Springs.

In the year 1916 near Mt. Trumbull another small settlement was started by the Bundy family and others. This was started after homesteads of 640 acres were being taken up. The people established themselves on these homesteads with the idea in mind of growing dry land crops and raising livestock. There was no permanent water and well water was never developed. The settlement has depended mainly on reservoir water and water hauled in for culinary use. The town is now much smaller than in years gone by and those living there depend on livestock.

About the year 1919 the Grand Canyon National Park was established on the southern point of the Kaibab forest. There are times during the peak of the tourist travel when there are large numbers of people in the area. It is, however, not a permanent and established town.

All other settlements of the Strip are located on or near the line between Utah and Arizona. The town of Short Creek was established by two or three families in about 1912 to 1914. The town depended mainly on a little farming and some stockraising. It did not increase in size a great deal until along in the 1950's. The name of the town was changed from Short Creek to Colorado City in January 1960. It is possibly growing more rapidly at the present time than any other town on the Arizona Strip.

William B. Maxwell owned Moccasin Springs in 1853. He sold the springs to a Mr. Rhodes. Other transfers were made and in 1873 the property was placed in the United Order, an organization fostered by the Mormon Church. These springs eventually fell into the hands of Jonathon Heaton. His family established a small town and has remained there ever since. In previous years the Windsor Castle Stock Growers Association had owned a one third interest in the springs. The stock of this company in turn gave its one third share to the Piute Indians living in and around Kanab. These Indians have established a settlement one and one half miles southeast of the town of Moccasin. The government in 1907 established the Kaibab Indian Reservation for the Indians who were living at Moccasin.

¹John Schmutz was the engineer for the saw mill and was a member of a small cooperative beef herd started there. He and three others operated the mill and herd for a year after the temple work closed out. He obtained one third interest in Nixon Spring and started a cattle ranch in Towoap Valley and Tucket Basin. He purchased the springs in Tucket from Jim Brower. Grandsons still operate a cattle ranch in Tucket, Towoap and Trumbull Mountain areas.

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Fredonia, Arizona, with a population of some 450 people was established in 1882. Reports have it that a number of men wished to settle their wives out of the confines of Utah and so established Fredonia. Fredonia means free women. My grandfather was one of the early settlers. His son Hyrum was the first male child born in the little settlement and was also the first death as he did not live very long. Fredonia is situated on highway 89A, is a flourishing little town, and is the gateway leading into the Eastern Strip area and also the Grand Canyon of the Colorado.

The Mormon settlers brought their horses and their cattle with them. They early found that they could not make settlements on the Strip because of the lack of sufficient water, but they also discovered that there were some small springs in the area and adjacent to them was excellent feed. The herds began to push southward and even though there were Indian depredations and troubles the livestock increased. William Maxwell settled in the area now known as Colorado City with his herds.

It was reported in May of 1865 that Dr. Whitmore had established himself at Pipe Springs. He had some fences built and had set out 1,000 grape vines also some peach and apple trees. He had substantial corrals and was milking fifty head of cows. On January 12, 1866, it was reported that the Indians had made a raid on Pipe Springs on January 8th, and had driven off the stock belonging to Dr. Whitmore. Dr. Whitmore and Robert McIntire had followed the raiders and had not been heard from since.

A Company of thirty-three men were gathered from the settlement to go out in search of the missing men. This company arrived at Pipe Springs without having encountered the men or Indians on the way. Searching parties were sent out from the Springs. Two Indians were taken prisoners on January 18th and one other was killed. The two prisoners claimed that they had not taken part in the raid and did not know anything about the missing men. James Andrus with a company of men continued to search and arrived in the area of what we now call Bull Rush. Bull Rush is a depression running through the country southeast of Pipe Springs. The depression breaks abruptly in cliffs from the higher terrain. The Andrus Company approached this depression in their search. They were not familiar with the country and rode to the edge of the cliff. Captain Andrus pulled the reins and his horse raised his head. It was at that moment that an arrow meant for Captain Andrus entered the horse's neck and saved the life of its rider. Five Indians were taken prisoners, others were killed and some of them got away. Some of the stolen animals were recaptured.

The two Indians, who had been taken prisoners and had been left at Pipe, confessed that they knew where the bodies of the slain men were. These Indians led to the spot some six miles southwest of Pipe Springs where the bodies were found under the snow. This information was reported to the Andrus party upon their return. All of the Indians were taken to the spot and killed. The bodies of Whitmore and McIntire were taken to St. George for burial.

The Indians remained excitable and rebellious during the year of 1866. Efforts were being made by Jacob Hamblin and others to visit the Indians across the river and keep peace with them. In April of 1866 Joseph Berry, Robert Berry and his wife were traveling from Kanabaville, Utah, to the settlements over in Kanab area. They had camped at Grafton, Utah, the previous night and were traveling by buggy in the area of the Maxwell ranch. Indians were in hiding and started chasing them. The bodies of the Berrys were later found badly mutilated. This massacre took place just southeast of what is now Colorado City. There is a knoll at the spot where the trouble occurred and is known as Berry Knoll.

In 1869 Major Powell was exploring the Grand Canyon. They arrived somewhere in the area of Toroweap. Dangerous rapids could be heard just down the river from where they had stopped to camp. Some of the crew felt that they could not go farther. The result was that three men climbed out of the canyon and intended to reach the Mormon settlements. These men had their guns, but no food. They intended to live off of the country. They later arrived at an Indian camp and were extremely hungry. The Indians took them in and gave them food. An Indian came into the camp from the east side of the river and reported that a squaw had been killed in a drunken brawl and these men were the guilty ones. The Indians believed this report and pumped the white's bodies full of arrows. A year later in 1870 Major Powell, in company with Jacob Hamblin, visited these Indians and asked about the men. The Indians admitted their guilt, apologized and said they were as little children, easily upset.

The Cannon Cattle Company was organized in March of 1870. The livestock to form this company were excess cattle owned by the Mormons. Captain James Andrus, who had participated in the hunt for Dr. Whitmore and Mr. McIntire was elected herd superintendent. This grew into a large herd of cattle. Even though Cannon Springs were in Utah, they were close to the line and most of the cattle grazed in Arizona territory. The Cannon Cattle Company later bought out the Winsor Castle Stock Growing Company which was organized January 2, 1873. Those of you who have visited the Pipe Springs National Monument have seen the strongly built fort. This fort was built under the supervision of A. P. Winsor in 1870 and was known as Winsor Castle. Winsor had been sent by Brigham Young to settle at Pipe Springs as it was intended to make it the headquarters of the Winsor Castle Stock Company. The Mormon Church collected tithing in those days (in kind). In other words they would take commodities for tithing. Tithing cattle were collected from Fillmore, Utah, south and to the Pipe Springs area.² Two thousand head of cattle were in the herd when they arrived at the ranch. The increase from this herd was used to feed the men, who were working on the Mormon temple in St. George. They moved thirty head of cattle every month into St. George and by 1873 were moving thirty head every two weeks to feed the workers.

The Winsor Castle Livestock Company was purchased by the Cannon Cattle Company and eventually when this herd was dissolved Captain James Andrus became the owner. The herd gradually scattered over the central part of the Strip wherever there was available water.

Brigham Young, in the year 1874, began to organize his people in to what he called the United Order. Each person was to turn into the order all of his earthly belongings and in return would receive certain privileges in the Order. The Order would see to it that the individual and his family were properly cared for. This organization was not very successful, but it did work out fairly well in what was called the settlements of Hoag Valley, Utah.

This Order began to expand in the livestock business. Stock moved out into what is known as the Houserock Valley country; also on the Kaibab Mountain and east into the sandhills. It was excellent stock grazing country.

²Part of these tithing cattle were put in House Rock Valley and were taken care of by John C. Naegle (Nagel) who had his own ranch in Nagel's Canyon on the west side of the Buckskin Mountains. Tim Lust is a grandson.

The Order thrived and the livestock increased. Eventually around the 1890's the Order broke up and the stock was divided. The stock had been branded with OOU which stood for Orderville United Order. Some individuals took cattle out of the order and some took sheep. The sheep had been run mainly in Utah while the cattle had been on the Arizona Strip. Some of the families who drew stock from this organization still run livestock on the Strip. The Esplin family drew sheep, but as time has gone by, they changed from sheep to cattle and Lee Esplin, a descendent operates the Esplin Cattle Company.

The Strip through the years had been considered as a cattle and horse country. The sheep had remained in Utah except for a few which had been held around Pipe Springs. The first herds of sheep seemed to have hit the strip in the fall of 1890--when Dave Esplin and Myron Holgate came over the line. Cattleman were sore about it and through their efforts a law was worked out in Arizona whereby herds of transient sheep should be taxed 25¢ per head. The sheepmen fought this and the law was found to be unconstitutional so that Arizona had to refund the money. The sheepmen continued to come out on the Strip, but instead of stopping in the northern area they congregated in the Toroweap and Tucket point country. Possibly the first reservoir ever built on the Strip was built in the lower end of Toroweap Valley.

There is a story told about a couple who ran their herds in the area. These two men were Swedes,³ recently having come to the U.S. from Sweden. They had some difficulty in their use of English. The camp mover looked down the Toroweap Valley and reported to the herder that he would go down on the hill he could see just a little ways off. He started down the valley with his outfit, the herd following. After a time the herder could see the outfit returning. It finally reached the herd and the driver explained his trouble. He said he had gone down there and had run into a great big ditch and couldn't get across to the other side. He was referring to the Grand Canyon of the Colorado.

The Arizona Strip was well covered with livestock by the year 1890. Stock had moved south to Parashant, Ivanpatch, Mt. Trumbull, Green Springs, Grassy Mountain, Hurricane Valley and Black Rock, in fact had covered that area as they had covered the Strip area towards the east. It was in 1890 that Preston Nutter moved his herd of cattle into the Strip area. Nutter had ranched in Colorado and the Uintah Country in Utah. He had gone into Arizona country and had purchased some four to five thousand head of cattle which he intended to trail back to the Uintah area. J. L. Whipple, who is now living, started in September 1890 with twenty other men to Gregg's Ferry on the Colorado where they were to meet the Nutter herd, which was coming in from the south. They had to wait some nine days after reaching the river for the herd to arrive. Some two thousand head of steers were crossed at this time with another herd to follow. The two thousand head were moved over to the Virgin River and thence up it and the Santa Clara Creek to the desert in Southern Utah. Winter became severe and Nutter decided that he did not have time to trail the herd to the Uintah country. He was told of the Arizona Strip so he turned his herd south to St. George, Utah. Part of the cattle were grazed that winter in the area of St. George, Utah. The remainder of the herd was driven out into the Hurricane Valley and Poverty Mountain. Many of these cattle were gathered the next spring and moved on to the Uintahs. Some cattle were left which were the beginning of the Nutter herd.

³These two Swedes were Albert Lundell and Charles Lundgren now of Cedar City.